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RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 5562
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 2776
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 0505
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 4956
RUAGAAA/COMUSKOREA SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 003137

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SUBJECT: JAPANESE ABDUCTION GROUPS UNEASY ON U.S. STANCE

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons 1.4(B)(D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Representatives of AFVKN and NARKN, two NGOs dedicated to the return of Japanese nationals abducted by the DPRK, expressed growing concern about the U.S. commitment to resolving the abduction issue in a meeting with political officers on June 27. Motivated by a strong desire to affect Japan's policy towards the DPRK, AFVKN and NARKN have successfully pushed Japanese lawmakers to amend the North Korean Human Rights Law to prohibit Japan from providing assistance to the DPRK absent resolution of the abduction issue. End Summary

Strong Concern about U.S. Stance

¶2. (C) Teruaki Masumoto, Secretary General of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (AFVKN), told Embassy Tokyo on June 27 that his April meeting with EAP PDAS Stephens in Washington left him with the impression that the State Department wanted to move forward on the abduction issue. However, recent U.S. steps, including the wording contained in the latest North Korea country report in the State Sponsors of Terrorism Report, left abductee groups worried about the U.S. government's stance on the abduction issue. Some abductee advocates now question USG willingness to support the return of all abductees from the DPRK, he said.

¶3. (C) According to Masumoto, Japan has gained "nothing" as a result of continuous dialogue with the DPRK. He claimed that the U.S. conciliatory attitude toward the DPRK allows Pyongyang to stall on resolving the abduction issue. The U.S., he added, is only focused on its own interests. As a result, AFVKN and the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN) will continue to call on the Japanese government and public to take a consistent stance on the abduction issue regardless of the actions of other Six-Party nations, he noted.

Doubt and Mistrust

¶4. (C) Following what he described as the U.S. decision to lift sanctions against the DPRK, Masumoto observed that abductee support groups believe "the State Department has

violated U.S. law." He also noted that former Deputy Secretary Armitage had previously identified the abduction of

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Japanese nationals as an act of state-sponsored terrorism. Masumoto said he told PDAS Stephens that Armitage's views on the abduction issue were the main reason many Japanese people supported U.S. efforts on terrorism and the war in Iraq. Many Japanese felt doubtful about the current U.S. commitment and mistrustful of U.S. intentions regarding the abduction issue, he asserted. As a result, he claimed that Japanese public sentiment is deeply suspicious of the U.S.

15. (C) Taking a different line, Tsutomu Nishioka, Permanent Vice Chairman of NARKN, said that AFVKN and NARKN are not suspicious of the U.S.; they are only suspicious of the DPRK because they believe the DPRK will continue to "cheat" Japan and avoid any resolution to the abduction issue.

Amend DPRK Human Rights Law

16. (C) AVFKN and NARKN initiated a new campaign on March 11, Nishioka said, which calls for the Japanese government to create a list of state sponsors of terror similar to the one used by the U.S. Nishioka stated that because the new list would take time to create, AFVKN and NARKN had first called on the Japanese government to amend the North Korean Human Rights Law. The amendment, passed in the recently concluded Diet session, requires the Japanese government to: 1) certify that Pyongyang has taken steps to resolve the abduction issue and, 2) seek improvements in DPRK human rights when providing assistance to North Korea. Absent either of those conditions, Japanese officials "must oppose" assistance to the DPRK by foreign governments or other international

TOKYO 00003137 002 OF 002

organizations. Nishioka noted that AFVKN and NARKN hope the revised law will prevent Kim Jong Il from obtaining loans from international financial institutions. When asked if AFVKN and NARKN want the law to prohibit Japan from providing assistance within the Six-Party framework, Nishioka replied with an emphatic "no." However, he said that AFVKN and NARKN support PM Abe's diplomatic policy of not providing assistance to the DPRK until progress is made on the abduction issue.

"Resolution" and "Progress" Defined

17. (C) In line with Abe's policies of "No resolution of the abduction issue, no normalization" and "No progress of the abduction issue, no energy assistance," Nishioka stated that AFVKN and NARKN have decided to continue to call for the return of all abductees. According to Nishioka, Prime Minister Abe first defined the specific actions that define "progress" and "resolution" on the abduction issue during a March 26 Diet session. PM Special Advisor Kyoko Nakayama later further clarified those terms for AFVKN and NARKN as follows: "Resolution is the return of all abductees to Japan," while progress will be achieved when the DPRK decides to return all abductees and begins actions to do so. Nishioka added that the terms "all abductees" include all of the 17 abductees whom the Japanese government officially recognizes.

Change of AFVKN Chairman

18. (C) Masumoto confirmed to Embassy Tokyo that current AFVKN Chairman Shigeru Yokota, father of Japan's most well-known abduction victim Megumi Yokota, plans to step down from his position on November 14 due to health concerns. Masumoto said that AFVKN will consider nominating a new chairman if the abduction issue is not resolved by that date, adding that the withdrawal of Mr. and Mrs. Yokota from AFVKN could

potentially damage the organization and its campaign.
SCHIEFFER